

Even the liberal ACLU, which used to care about individual rights and transparency, is prioritizing woke bureaucrats ahead of middle-class parents. Here was the ACLU's statement:

Curriculum transparency bills are just thinly veiled attempts at chilling teachers and students from learning and talking about race and gender in schools.

So let's think about that for a minute. The far left is admitting in public that if the public gets to look at the racial and gender theories that they want to teach little kids, then those lesson plans will become untenable.

I am going to say that again. The far left is admitting in public that if the public gets a look at the racial and gender theories that they want to teach little kids, then these lesson plans will become untenable.

That is what they are actually saying. If parents gain transparency into the crazy stuff we are teaching, we might have to stop teaching it.

In other words, their reaction proves the point. The fact that woke bureaucrats are this terrified by transparency proves exactly—exactly—why parents deserve it.

Bear in mind, these same people are passionate supporters of a sweeping toddler takeover that would give Federal bureaucrats huge new powers to shape early childhood across America and discriminate against religious daycares.

The choice before American families is actually pretty stark. On the one hand, an alliance between Big Labor, woke bureaucrats, and many elected Democrats apparently wants indefinitely masked children being taught radical nonsense while parents are pushed to the sidelines. But Republicans at the local, State, and national levels are standing up for science, for common sense, and for the children's best interests. The party of parents has your back.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The majority leader is recognized.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, over the last 12 months, the economy has rebounded at levels that we have not seen in decades—a 5.7-percent GDP growth rate and 6.6 million new jobs. This is the fastest our economy has grown since, perhaps, 1984, and the new jobs we added to the economy were the most ever for a President's first year.

After former President Trump botched our national response to COVID, America is now on the right track under President Biden, but we

face serious challenges that demand action from Congress. The cost of living has come up for families across the country and around the world. The destruction unleashed by COVID has decimated supply chains, strained the labor supply, and the effects of a global pandemic that began 2 years ago still reverberate today. These challenges demand action, and Democrats remain laser-focused on lowering costs for American families.

Yesterday, our caucus met for our weekly lunch, where we held a spirited, enthusiastic discussion about ideas from our Members of how we can lower costs and take action to do so. We talked about how we can continue working to lower childcare costs, prescription drug costs, the costs of semiconductors, which is a huge driver of price increases across a wide variety of products, and things as basic and vital as the cost of food and meat.

Lowering costs will continue to be a caucuswide effort. We are not going to agree on everything, but we are all on the same page in that we need to tackle the issue head on.

That is the difference between Democrats and Republicans. Rising costs, of course, impact all of us, whether we come from blue or red States, but Democrats are the ones laser-focused on showing where we stand and in offering solutions that aim squarely at the problem. Republicans seem to have no solutions, just rhetoric. The other side, sadly, seems, oftentimes, motivated by something else. Rather than working with us in a bipartisan spirit, our Republican colleagues seem more comfortable giving speeches that go on and on about rising costs without offering any solutions. Complaining about the problem doesn't make inflation better—proposing solutions does—and that is precisely what Democrats will continue focusing on.

Over the next month and beyond, Members from our side will continue offering a number of solutions—solutions—that will lower costs and leave more money in people's pockets. We need to help working families build wealth after the pandemic. We need to lower the costs of medications like insulin, which can still reach \$600 a month. We need to relieve our strained supply chains and increase domestic manufacturing on things like chips—and on that front, I am hopeful that we can take bipartisan action soon.

Our Republican colleagues, we hope, will join us in these efforts. Our Members would welcome it.

We have come a long way from the start of COVID, but we still have more to do. Democrats' goals are to make sure that the job creation and wage increases of last year carry into this year. We are going to keep working on that this spring, and I hope to see our colleagues from the other side work with us to improve the lives of the American people. If we can keep wages growing and get costs down, the average American will have more money in his or her pocket to live a better life.

FURTHER ADDITIONAL EXTENDING GOVERNMENT FUNDING ACT

Mr. President, on the CR, soon our Republican colleagues must come to an agreement with Democrats for passing a continuing resolution to keep the government open until March 11. This extension is necessary in order to give appropriators more time to arrive at an omnibus.

On the one hand, bipartisan negotiations on a yearlong spending bill continue to go well—a credit to everyone working on this issue from both sides of the aisle. I thank Chairman LEAHY, Ranking Member SHELBY, and my House colleagues.

On the other hand, right now, the thing we must do—the responsible thing to do—is to pass the CR before the deadline on Friday. Democrats are united in approving it just as it was approved with great bipartisan support in the House.

Nobody here wants a Republican government shutdown. I dare say Republicans prefer not to have a Republican shutdown, but for that to happen, Republicans must keep working with us on an agreement to move quickly on a CR. Democrats are working in good faith to reach a time agreement soon with our Republican colleagues. There is every reason in the world to arrive at an agreement quickly, so I urge my colleagues on the other side to keep working with us to get there.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. President, on nominations, later today, the Senate is scheduled to advance and confirm a pair of critical Department of Defense nominees.

One of them is Celeste Wallander, nominated to serve as Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs. A veteran of the National Security Council, Ms. Wallander is one of our country's top Russian experts and a deeply experienced foreign policy adviser.

As tensions persist in Eastern Europe, Ms. Wallander's expertise is urgently needed, and her nomination must be approved as soon as possible. Frankly, it should have happened weeks ago, the moment she was reported out of committee with support from both sides, but Ms. Wallander has remained on hold because one Member of this body—just one Republican—has objected to her swift passage.

Intentionally delaying the confirmation of a qualified expert on Russian affairs at a time like this is supremely reckless and is making the American people less safe. For a Member of the Senate to insist on this hold is a clear risk to our national security, and it only serves to undermine our defense efforts. It is unacceptable and the definition of "cynical."

Let me say it again.

To intentionally delay the confirmation of a critical Department of Defense nominee and a Russian expert at a time when tensions persist in Ukraine and Eastern Europe is supremely reckless and is making the American people less safe.